



Testimony by the Connecticut Association for the Gifted
Raised Bill 5308; Hartford, CT, Feb. 24, 2016

On behalf of the Connecticut Association for the Gifted (CAG), we are writing in support of the Raised Bill 5308. If passed, this legislation would provide an integrated and comprehensive network of proper identification and differentiated support of students at ALL levels of instruction. For the first time, Connecticut law would expressly direct school districts to enable their gifted and talented students to take advantage of the schools' systems of supports and interventions related to enrichment and advanced learning opportunities.

We are pleased to see this proposed legislation recognize the long neglected special needs of our state's high ability students. For decades now, it has been mostly a residential zip code that decides which of Connecticut's advanced learners have a chance to receive quality programming adapted to their needs. Raised Bill 5308 would help level the playing field for ALL gifted and talented students in the State.

Until now, Connecticut policy has not required annual monitoring and reporting of services for high-ability students. It has not required that identified gifted and talented youngsters receive specialized services – services that could include subject or grade acceleration, cluster grouping, project-based or student-initiated study, etc.

Recently, due to persistent cutbacks in funding, even the legally required identification of gifted and talented students was carried out in only about 60% of the school districts in the state. The “we have no gifted and talented students in our school” assertion made by teachers in schools in many underserved areas of the state is a statement that is both false and heartbreaking. Although someone surveying the gifted programming in our state could form an opinion that giftedness is a function of economic privilege, we know that giftedness is a special need that, like other special emotional and cognitive needs, knows no social, racial or cultural boundaries. Our future leaders in innovation, creative designers of technical and cultural products, inventors, gifted writers and artists come from all backgrounds and social strata, and any investment in their proper education is indeed an investment in our state's prosperity in the future.

Raised Bill 5308, by including gifted and talented students among its beneficiaries, further opens opportunities for individualized education to be afforded to all students. It should be noted that a consistent inclusion of gifted learners within the scope of general educational services might help in emphasizing gifted education's pedagogy and its ability to benefit ALL students -- through its focus on students' strengths rather than challenges, emphasis on student-initiated learning, high expectations for instructional outcomes, etc.

For the benefit of ALL students in Connecticut's schools, we thank you for bringing this Bill to the floor and we urge you to pass it.

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President

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